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August 13, 1980

29900 Highway 20
Fort Bragg, California 95437

Superintendent
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
Ash Mountain
Three Rivers, California 83271

For the Public Hearing Record

RE: Mineral King Comprehensive Management Plan.

Dear Sir or Madam:

Please include these comments and suggestions as part of the public hearing record on the Mineral King Comprehensive Management Plan (July 1980), which I recently received.

I would, first of all, like to restate that I have enjoyed Mineral King in its primitive state for about the last 30 years. I have seen the work of the many concerned across the country prevent unwise development in this fragile alpine valley, and bring the planning situation to where it is today - an excellent planning framework that needs to be fleshed out mainly in the area of allowable visitor impacts while maintaining the excellent environmental quality, and wilderness characteristics.

Proposed Hammond Visitor Contact Station:

I strongly support this concept of locating visitor oriented development away from Mineral King Valley, and would suggest that it be applied throughout the National Park System. The main question here is how to control increasing auto traffic on the Mineral King access road. I would like to suggest that this traffic needs control and regulation in the very worst way, and that the best way to do it would be a bus system plus encouragement of hiking, horseback, and other low impact access.

Please consider as part of the Final Plan at least the initial steps towards banning the private automobile from the Mineral King access road.

Silver City; Atwell Mill; Faculty Flat; and the Mineral King Valley:

I cannot agree that automobile oriented facilities should be maintained or increased. The private auto stands alone and unchallenged in its role as one of the worst degraders of environmental quality and the park/wilderness experience.

As a very deeply concerned member of the public, I would request that the alternative to maintaining or increasing automobile oriented facilities of phasing out the private visitor automobile east of Hammond should be thoroughly explored in the Mineral King Final Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

Access:

I again disagree with the proposal that the Mineral King road should be surfaced or otherwise improved to ease access for the private visitor automobile. This road should be maintained in its current semi-primitive state for low impact uses, and the private visitor automobile phased out. Please consider this alternative in the Final Plan and Environmental Assessment.

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Winter Use; Backcountry Use; Interpretation; Resource Management; Wilderness; Land Acquisition and Permittee Properties; Proposals for the Future:

All of these proposals appear adequate or better; some of the proposals for the future are excellent.

I would again like to suggest that the emphasis be on low impact park and wilderness uses east of Hammond. Although relocating Atwell Mill and Mineral King Valley facilities to Faculty Flat may be good planning, additional trailhead parking for private visitor automobiles at this location is not. Faculty Flat is just much too close to the Valley itself.

I would like to say in closing that I am fully aware of the problems that the Park Service encounters each time that it attempts to begin phasing the private automobile, and automobile oriented development, out of our National Park System. These problems reflect the still prevalent national attitude towards these inherently environmentally degrading and destructive machines.

What I am asking for here is a look towards the future. Why should we continue to plan a place as beautiful and fragile as Mineral King around the private visitor automobile? Isn't the experience at Yellowstone and in the Yosemite Valley ample harbinger of what may come to Mineral King? It is time to begin planning our parks around park and wilderness values, and around people unimpeded by their machines and the very machine caused problems that these folks come to the parks to escape.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ron Guenther

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